Snp 2.2 — Āmagandha Sutta — The Stench of Decomposing Flesh

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.
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Text

Snp. 2.2

Āmagandha Sutta

“The Stench of Decomposing Flesh”

239. “The good who eat millet, chickpeas, newly sprouting greens, fallen fruits, wild grains, and roots; having received their meal without harming others, do not speak falsely nor consume them for the enjoyment of sense pleasures.

240. “Eating and drinking the finest and exquisitely prepared delicacies, with delicious food and drinks offered by those, who go through so much trouble to bring them to you, sitting there Kassapa, you eat amidst the stench of decomposing flesh.

241. “‘The stench of decomposing flesh is not appropriate for me,’ you stated, O kinsman of Brahmā. Yet, I see you partaking of food that includes fine rice, and dishes carefully prepared with the flesh of birds. Tell me, Kassapa, what do you consider to be partaking of food that has ‘the stench of decomposing flesh?’”

242. “Harming and killing living beings, abusing, and mutilating them, beating and torture, fraud, lying, cheating and being deceitful, adultery, hypocrisy, going to others’ mates, engaging in the practice of charms and spells to

influence others. All that, I consider to be partaking of food that has ‘the stench of decomposing flesh.’

243. “Having no restraint whatsoever when it comes to experiencing all kinds of sense pleasures, always hungry for more tastes; while being impure themselves, they enjoy being surrounded by filth. Those who are drenched in wrong views thinking that there are no outcomes to wholesome actions, nor that there could be another world waiting for them once they die, it is this that I consider to be partaking of food that has ‘the stench of decomposing flesh.’

244. “Heartless backbiters, viciously ruthless and cunning betrayers of friendship, conceited and lacking any compassion, those misers who never give anything away to others, it is they, whom I consider to be partaking of food that has ‘the stench of decomposing flesh.’

245. “Angry and full of hostility in their pitch-black hearts; contentious, hateful, stubborn, deceitful, jealous, and arrogant; those who think so highly of themselves, who put others down, yet remain boastful of their empty accomplishments; those who keep associating with their wicked friends, it is they, whom I consider to be partaking of food that has ‘the stench of decomposing flesh.’

246. “Those with evil behaviors, who run away when it is their turn to repay, the worst of men who enjoy cunning people out of their wealth, taking from the needy the little that they have, it is they, whom I consider to be partaking of food that has ‘the stench of decomposing flesh.’

247. “Such people as these who live unrestrained, destroying living beings, the inconsiderate ones who make others’ lives miserable; those evil and cruel ones, with bloody hands and malicious speech, it is they, whom I consider to be partaking of food that has ‘the stench of decomposing flesh.’

248. “Those with voracious appetites, with the intent to kill others, addicted to doing evil; those who at their moment of death, will open their eyes next, only to see they have fallen head-first into the miserable hells, as if immediately deposited there, it is they, whom I consider to be partaking of food that has ‘the stench of decomposing flesh.’

249. “It is, therefore, NOT the eating of fish or meat, nor fasting, nor going naked, nor the shaven head or matted hair, nor the wearing of rough animal hides, nor the pulling out of one’s hair, nor observing the fire sacrifice, nor the muttering of verses and mantras, nor engaging in various austerities, ceremonies or oblations to somehow gain immortality, nor the keeping of seasonal observances and other monthly rituals and gatherings, one hopes would purify and somehow cleanse the heart of an ordinary person, who has not yet crossed beyond all doubt.

250. “So, guard well and protect the gates of your mental faculties, while living your life gently and honestly, with senses restrained, in accordance with the Dhamma. It is in this manner, that the wise ones give up all the shackles that bind, and thus eliminate all suffering from their lives, by not clinging to anything, whether things they witnessed or not.”

252. In this way, The Blessed One explained to the brahmin, again and again, until the master of the Vedic chants finally understood the meaning of these words, as the unfettered and taintless Great Teacher taught him through the use of beautiful and hard-to-fathom examples, which revealed the true meaning behind the words on ‘partaking food that has the stench of decomposing flesh.’

253. By listening to the encouraging words of The Blessed One that are stainless and that lead to the cessation of suffering, the brahmin was humbled as he fell at the feet of the Tathāgata with tears of joy, paid homage to The Blessed One and begged to receive the Going Forth, to end all suffering.